



# Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

**Galatians**

**Free through the Cross**

**Galatians 6:11-18**

**06/16/2019**

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## Main Point

Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone means boasting in the cross alone.

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## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Of all the different rooms in your house, which one do you and your family use the most or spend most of your time in and why?**

All rooms in our home serve a purpose, but 1 or 2 rooms always seem to be the most used and therefore the most important. Many would argue that the kitchen is by far the room most used as a family. Multiple meals and snacks are prepared and eaten in the kitchen, and some of a family's most important conversations take place at the dinner table. Likewise, the Christian faith has many important doctrines. Christianity would not exist were it not for these many

important truths. But all of these important doctrines revolve around one: the cross. Without the cross, there is no Christianity. It was for this reason that Paul concluded his letter to the Galatians by emphasizing the importance of the cross in the face of false teachers who would minimize its impact. Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone means boasting in the cross alone.

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## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:11-13.**

**What did Paul say the false teachers in Galatia were motivated by (vv. 12-13)?**

**What do you think tends to motivate false teachers today?**

These false teachers wanted to “make a good showing in the flesh” (v. 12a). They cared more about how they looked to others than whether their ministry was honoring to God. Their motive wasn’t the glory of God, but the promotion of themselves. They also wanted to avoid persecution (v. 12b). The Jewish religion was an accepted religion in the Roman Empire, but being a Christian could get you killed. A third motive Paul identified was their hypocrisy (v. 12). Paul called them out for not keeping the law themselves—a common mark of false teachers was that they picked and chose what issues they were legalistic about. And finally, Paul said that these false teachers “boast in your flesh” (v. 13b), meaning they brag about their followers.

**How might the gospel be compromised by teachers who are overly concerned with how their ministry appears to others?**

**How is justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone contrary to the false teaching the church faced?**

**How do you think Christians in our country might face persecution in the future? How can we be prepared to live faithfully for Christ in the face of persecution?**

**Are there certain areas of Christian freedom that you tend to be more strict about than others? How can we guard our hearts against hypocrisy?**

It would be easy to ignore Paul's teaching because we aren't false teachers; however, the motives that Paul identified in these false teachers are all things that can easily consume us. It is easy for us to get caught up in image management and pretending to be deeply spiritual when, in reality, we are struggling. We want other Christians to think we are more spiritual than we are. Trusting Christ, however, means being willing to let Him expose our false motives so that we can begin living for the glory of Christ. This is what it looks like to boast in the cross.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 6:14-18.**

**How was Paul different from the false teachers in verses 12-13?**

**What motivated Paul's life and ministry (v. 14)?**

**Why does Paul say that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything (v. 15)?**

Circumcision is an outward sign, and such outward signs are meaningless. What counts is God changing us from the inside out. What matters is justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The message of the false teachers was powerless to change lives because they were only concerned with appearances. Paul, however, was concerned with the true spiritual transformation and growth that only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul only wanted to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ, because he recognized that his and anyone

else's spiritual growth is purely because of the work of God. Because Paul believed, lived, and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, he did not take credit for the fruit of his ministry. Instead, he rejoiced in the grace and mercy of God.

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## **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Have you ever bragged to someone about your spiritual growth or service in the church? How might bragging about those things actually point people away from Christ?**

**Most, if not all, false teaching encourages us to spend our lives earning God's approval and boasting in our efforts. How is such a life a wasted life? Why is boasting in Jesus' work not a wasted life?**

**Why does a life committed to earning God's favor through works keep us from experiencing every good thing God wants to give us in Christ?**

**Examine your life. Ask the Spirit to search your heart. Are there any areas in which you are boasting in your own efforts and not in the work of Jesus on the cross? Repent and trust in the cross.**

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## **Pray**

Lead your group in prayer thanking God for the cross and the resurrection. Ask the Lord for forgiveness for the many times we have taken credit for things He has accomplished. Ask Him to help us boast in the cross this week as we seek to point our friends and families to Christ.

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# Commentary

## GALATIANS 6:11-18

6:11. Paul concludes his epistle to the Galatians by contrasting the improper motives of the legalists with his proper motives. Paul now discontinues using a scribe. In Koine (common) Greek quotation marks were not used. So emphasis was conveyed by enlarging the letters of the words written. Paul personally picks up the pen and writes with “large letters” to emphasize his concluding words and to validate that the letter was genuine.

6:12. The fear of others may have been a significant motive of the Judaizers. They may have been trying to accommodate the gospel to the Jews to avoid persecution by them. By including the law, they made the converted Jews happy. In contrast, by preaching the grace message which excluded the law, Paul had experienced harsh persecution at the hands of the Jews.

6:13. Other than being circumcised, some of the Judaizers did not try to keep the law, but they wanted new converts to Christianity also to be circumcised because it made them look good to the other legalists. They bragged about the number of converts who were also circumcised.

6:14. In contrast to the Judaizers, Paul had pure motives. Paul’s motive was to brag, not about himself or his merits, but about “the cross of our Lord Christ.” The Judaizers gloried in the flesh (circumcision), but Paul gloried in Christ. The “world” was “crucified to” Paul and he “to the world.” He looked at the world as if it were on a cross; that is, he considered the world as good as dead and he as good as dead to the world.

6:15. It is easy to get caught up in the externals (of circumcision or uncircumcision). Paul says that in all reality, the externals are meaningless. “What counts” is a new creation produced by a new spiritual birth (compare 2 Cor. 5:17). “What counts” is God changing us from the inside out. The message of the Judaizers was powerless to change hearts. What changes hearts is faith in Christ for both salvation and spiritual growth.

6:16. “Peace and mercy” are available to those who believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

6:17. "The marks of Jesus" are all over Paul's body. The word marks was used of the brand that identified slaves or animals. Paul had often been beaten for the sake of Christ, even in Galatia itself (Acts 14:19). Some of those who would be reading this letter would recall how Paul had nearly died to get the message of the gospel to them. Paul's stonings and beatings as an apostle of the message of grace are his final proof that he is a true apostle. These markings are his signs that he was a slave of Christ and not of the law. These physical scars were Paul's final credentials of authenticity. These signs of ownership indicated that his motive was to please God regardless of the consequences. Paul would rather fight for truth and grace than switch to falsehood and the law. These marks are Paul's way of saying, "Here me well. I've earned the right to be heard, respected, and obeyed."

6:18. Paul began his letter with the commendation of "grace"(Gal. 1:3). Now he concludes with that same blessing of grace. Throughout all the division and suspicion, Paul still ends with affection by calling them "brothers." With all of his godly logic and now his open love, how can the Galatians refuse the appeal of this letter? How can they continue to accommodate the theological atrocities of the Judaizers? We hear nothing more about these churches, and we are led to believe that Paul persuaded them to abstain from legalism and to affirm grace. For a short moment they thought about going back to the dark prison of legalism, but finally they came to their senses and stayed out in the bright sunshine of grace's freedom.